

# Lasagna

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Most Lasagna recipes call for a combination of different types of meat, usually including beef, pork, and sausage. I use an all-beef or turkey recipe and I skip the sausage because it's hard to find sausage with my food allergies. Because this recipe doesn't call for sausage, I tend to be heavy-handed with the spices. Taste your meat sauce and your ricotta mixture as you go to ensure that the recipe isn't over-seasoned. If you do want to use sausage, use half plain ground meat and half sausage and taste carefully as you go. This recipe will accommodate an extra half-pound of meat if you want to use 3/4c ground meat and 3/4c sausage.

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## Cooking Confidence Scale Score

**High 3 to Low 4** This recipe has three parts that are individually pretty simple (making sauce from scratch, preparing cheese mixture, assembling layers) but can be hectic and stressful when combined. To make the recipe easier, prepare the sauce and grate the cheese the day before you cook the lasagna and refrigerate. Pre-heat the oven and re-heat the sauce while preparing the cheese mixture, then assemble.

## Time Commitment

- Prep time: 15 minutes (chopping onions and garlic and grating parmesan)
- Stove time: 30-50 minutes to fully cook, simmer, and season sauce

- Assembly: 10 minutes
- Oven time: 45 minutes to 1 hour
- Setting Time: At least 10 Minutes

Total: 1hr 50 minutes to 2hr 25 minutes

## Tools

- Oven
- Stove
- Cheese Grater
- Large Saucepan with tight-fitting lid
- One Large Mixing Bowl
- Large Cooking Spoon, solid or slotted
- Fork
- Ladle
- Cutting Board
- Chef's Knife
- 9x13x3" inch baking pan
- Cookie Sheet
- Foil or a cover for the pan
- Optional small baking pan for extra cheese mix
- Oven mitt or potholder

## Ingredients

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### Core Ingredients

- 1lb Ground Beef or Turkey (if using Turkey or lean beef add 2tbsp butter or olive oil to sauce)
- 1 large onion, diced
- 2 14.5oz cans of Diced Tomatoes, undrained (for an optional smokey flavor you can use flame-roasted diced tomatoes)
- 1 4oz can of Tomato Paste
- 6oz Parmesan Cheese, grated
- Olive Oil
- 12 Cloves of Garlic, minced (or 2 tsp garlic powder rehydrated before use)
- 32oz Ricotta Cheese (I use half whole and half skim)
- 6oz fresh mozzarella, sliced into rounds
- 3/4 c milk
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 2tbsp butter (for use with lean meats)
- No-boil Lasagna Noodles

## Spices

Your spices can be adjusted for taste. At a minimum you will need sugar, salt, black pepper, basil, oregano, parsley and bay leaves. Tamari, mushroom powder, smoked paprika, cayenne pepper are optional additions you can mix in to find what tastes good to you. As you cook, taste periodically to see if you like where the flavor is going. Keep in mind that you will be adding unseasoned pasta noodles and some unseasoned cheese so if your sauce or cheese mix are slightly over-seasoned it will balance out, but adjust flavors incrementally to avoid a salty lasagna.

- 2tsp Salt
- 1/2 tsp Black Pepper
- 1/2 tsp White Pepper (optional, you can use black pepper in both the sauce and the cheese mixture if you want)
- 1tsp dried ground basil
- 1tsp dried ground oregano
- 1.5 tbsp dried parsley, or half bunch of fresh parsley chopped finely
- 1/2 tbsp Tamari Sauce
- 1 tsp mushroom powder (this may be sold as mushroom seasoning, or umami seasoning mix; if you can't find it but you want more umami flavor, add more tamari)
- 1 tsp smoked paprika (really good if you're using the flame-roasted diced tomatoes)
- 1 tsp cayenne pepper (chili pepper can be used if you want something less spicy)
- 1 tbsp sugar
- 2 Bay Leaves

## Cooking Instructions

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- Pre-heat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit

## Sauce

Ingredients: Ground meat, Onion, Canned Tomatoes, Tomato Paste, Olive Oil, Butter, Garlic, Half the salt, Half the pepper (if you're using white pepper the white pepper goes in the sauce and the black pepper goes in the cheese mixture), 1/2 tbsp parsley, Bay Leaves, Sugar, Basil, Oregano. If you're using them: Tamari, Mushroom Powder, Paprika, and Cayenne go in the sauce.

- Place the saucepan over the stove over medium heat. Add Olive oil and Butter if using it and heat until liquid.
- Add onion and garlic to the oil and heat until the onions and stir until onion and garlic are coated in oil.
- Add Oregano, Basil, Parsley, White Pepper (or half black pepper) and stir together, moving frequently until onion is softened and translucent.
- Add ground meat to pan and brown, stirring to combine with spices.
- When meat is browned but not cooked, add 2 cans of diced tomatoes and 1 can of tomato

paste to pot; stir until combined and bring to a low boil.

- Once sauce is boiling add bay leaves and reduce heat to a simmer; cover pan and simmer for 30 minutes.
- After the meat is completely cooked in the sauce, add sugar, and add small amounts of remaining seasoning (retaining at least 1tbsp parsley, 1/2 tsp black pepper) and stir.

To adjust taste, add seasoning in small amounts, stir, and let heat covered for 3-5 minutes before tasting again.

Once the sauce tastes good to you, remove from heat, cover, and set aside.

## **Cheese Mixture**

Ingredients: Ricotta, Milk, Eggs, Salt, Pepper, Parsley, and about 2/3rds of the grated parmesan.

- Put ricotta in the bowl, add 1/2 tsp salt, 1/2 tsp black pepper, 1/2 tsp parsley, and stir until well combined.
- Add 2/3rds of parmesan and stir until combined.
- Gradually mix in milk, making sure not to thin the mixture too much (you're aiming for the texture of custard, not a runny texture)
- Taste mixture, adding salt or pepper as needed then stir to test again before adjusting spices.
- Once you are satisfied with the taste, mix in two beaten eggs until the mixture is well combined.

## **Assembly**

You will be placing layers in your pan in the following pattern: sauce, cheese mixture, pasta. I generally find that I end up with two complete layers (sauce + cheese + pasta) and I finish with pasta and a thin layer of sauce. Remove the bay leaves as you come across them in the sauce; do not bake them into the lasagna.

- Add a thin layer of sauce to the pan, spreading it evenly.
- Add a thin layer of cheese mixture on top of the pan, spreading it evenly.
- Add a layer of pasta; I find that 4 noodles covers the surface; don't worry about slight gaps around the noodles.
- Add another layer of sauce.
- Add another layer of cheese.
- Add another layer of pasta.
- Add the remainder of the sauce on the last layer of pasta.
- Sprinkle the remaining parmesan cheese evenly across the top of the last layer of sauce.
- Use the sliced mozzarella and place it across the top of the dish, leaving some gaps in between the slices
- Sprinkle the remaining parsley on top of the dish
- Oil the shiny side of the tinfoil and place the tinfoil oiled-side-down on the pan, covering it firmly.
- If you have leftover cheese mixture, you can add it to the small baking pan and bake alongside

the lasagna until the surface is lightly browned; this makes a nice spread for bread or toast or a dip for vegetables.

## **Baking**

- Place covered baking pan on cookie sheet to prevent dripping in the oven and place in oven.
- Bake covered for 35 minutes.
- Remove foil and bake for a further 15 minutes or until the top layer of cheese is bubbling and browning in places.
- Remove from oven and let stand for at least 10 minutes before serving.

## **Serving**

- The longer you allow the casserole to cool before serving, the more firmly it will be set. If you serve it when it is still very hot at least the first slice will be a disaster. This slices best after it has been fully cooled in the refrigerator for at least two hours. If you're serving it from the oven, expect a bit of a mess.
- This lasagna is a full meal on its own but I quite like it with baked broccoli with garlic.
- One pan of Lasagna is 9-12 servings, depending on how big you like your serving.

## **Storing**

- Store covered for up to one week.
- Once cooled, Lasagna can be cut into slices and wrapped in foil then put in freezer bags. Frozen slices can be stored in an airtight bag for 3 months.

## **Re-Heating**

- 3min in a 900w Microwave for a single slice
  - 30 minutes covered in a 350 degree Fahrenheit Oven to reheat as many slices as you want; if heating from frozen, use pans with a lip to re-heat. Heat until center temperature is 165 Fahrenheit.
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